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ART. I. — *Documents from the Department of War, accompanying the President's Message to Congress, at the Commencement of the Third Session of the Twenty-Seventh Congress.* 1842. 8vo. pp. 354.

MILITARY education has been regarded by all nations, whether barbarous or civilized, as an important measure of national policy. Although science in the management of armies and the conduct of battles was displayed by the great generals of antiquity, whether leading hordes from the desert or at the head of disciplined soldiers, yet the camp was the only school where the elements of military knowledge were taught. Early education was directed rather to the development of physical power and the cultivation of patriotic sentiments, than to the acquisition of scientific principles which could be afterwards practically used. But when liberty was destroyed by the lust of conquest, when mercenaries were employed by the state, and citizenship ceased to be required of a soldier, when the ranks of the army were recruited from the refuse of the people, and war, although "improved into an art, was degraded into a trade," patriotism was no longer an essential element of military education.

The invention of gunpowder, by revolutionizing war, produced a greater change in the military education of youth. Physical strength was of little avail against invisible messengers of death. Armor encumbered, instead of defending, the wearer. Battles were gained more by skill and less by

courage. Strategy took the place of personal daring. Science, brought to the attack of a fortified place, calculates to a day the period of its reduction, and renders a parallel to the siege of Troy, of Veii, or of Numantia, impossible in modern times. Positions are more important than numbers; and although the larger will always overcome the smaller force where the disparity is great, yet the campaigns of the mighty captain, who "chained to his biography the history of Europe," demonstrate that the power of mind, whether original as the inspiration of genius, or acquired through the instrumentality of education, does more for the success of military operations, than the magnitude of an army, the perfection of its appointments, or the valor of the troops.

The superiority of science was amply shown during the seventeenth century, in the campaigns of Turenne, and by the exploits of Marlborough in the commencement, and the achievements of Frederic in the middle, of the eighteenth century; and war was even then elevated from the rank of an art to the dignity of a science. The necessity of early scientific education was not, however, fully comprehended. Although George the Second, in 1741, had founded the Royal Military College at Woolwich, and elementary schools existed also in France, Russia, and Austria, they had acquired no practical importance. The subject did not receive the attention it deserved until the French Revolution had desolated Europe, — until nations began to tremble for their independent existence, and the propagandism of France shook to its base every throne on the continent. During that period, the Polytechnic School was erected, military colleges were founded in England, and this country, urged by the recommendations of its great men and the experience of its Revolution, established the national institution at West Point.

This institution has lately been the object of much censure, and the tenor of the objections advanced against it shows that its character is misunderstood. We believe the existence of this Academy to be essential to the national safety and honor, and that it deserves the cordial support of the American people. Believing, also, that opposition will cease when accurate information concerning it shall be generally diffused, we propose to give a statement of its interior organization and management, in greater detail than has hitherto appeared in print.

A Cadet is a warrant officer of the army, holding a rank intermediate between the highest class of non-commissioned officers and the lowest class of subalterns. The students at the Military Academy are, therefore, a corps of United States officers, subject to the orders of the President, like other members of the army. The engineers are stationed at West Point, which is a military post, and, together with certain professors and teachers appointed by law, they constitute the Academy. The Cadets are a part of the Engineer Corps, the commandant of which is the Inspector of the School. The Superintendent is appointed from this corps, and no officer, except the inspector, can command at the post but as his subordinate.

The Military Academy is not merely a college, from which, as from other institutions, a student can withdraw at his option. It is a military post, to which warrant officers are ordered at the discretion of the President, to receive practical and scientific military instruction. The Cadets may, at any period, be detached from this post to perform services of any other nature, at any other place. Like all officers or soldiers, they are bound to perform the duty required of them so long as the President chooses to require it. Upon entering the army as Cadets, they sign an enlistment and take the oath of allegiance like common soldiers, their period of enlistment being eight years instead of five. They receive a pay of twenty-eight dollars per month, and are subjected to the Army Regulations, to the Rules and Articles of War, and to trial and punishment by a garrison or general court-martial. When dismissed, they are "dismissed from the *service* of the United States," and, upon graduating, they are *promoted* to a higher rank. Although resignations are seldom refused, neither a Cadet nor a commissioned officer has any absolute right to be discharged. The engagement of the former to serve for eight years, therefore, imposes upon him no greater obligation to remain in the service, than if he had received a commission instead of a warrant. It may, however, deter those from joining the Academy, who do not intend to adopt the profession of arms, and, by rendering discreditable an attempt to violate their original contract, cause them to remain in the service longer than was formerly the case.

The number of Cadets is limited by a late law to one for

each Congressional District and Territory, and ten to be taken at large, making about two hundred and forty in all. Warrants are conferred by the President, on nomination by the Secretary of War. Candidates are presented to the Secretary by the members of Congress, who make their selections from the applicants in their districts according to their own principles. Those nominated at large are appointed without reference to their place of residence, and thus the sons of persons who, being in the employment of the government, have no fixed domicile, are enabled to enjoy the benefits of the Academy.

Candidates are ordered to repair to West Point and report themselves to the Superintendent, between the 1st and 20th of June in each year. They are there quartered in the barracks, instructed in the school of the soldier, and those branches of knowledge required for admission, which are very few, being only the rudiments of an indifferent English education. They must be at least sixteen years old, and not over twenty-one, not less than five feet high, and must not be deformed, nor afflicted with any disease or infirmity which would render them unfit for military service. Any boy of three years' standing in any public school of Massachusetts is qualified, in point of information, to enter the Military Academy. Though some individuals from the Atlantic States have received warrants after a successful and distinguished collegiate course, yet the character of the institution is so popular and democratic, that instances are not infrequent, where the necessary arithmetical knowledge is almost wholly gained in the two or three weeks of preliminary instruction. Some of the brightest ornaments of the Academy were rejected upon their first attempts to enter, and finally succeeded only by close application, during the time of encampment, in qualifying themselves to pass an examination in September, which is sometimes allowed.

The organization of the corps is two-fold, having separate objects in view. In reference to instruction, the Cadets are divided into four classes. The class corresponding to the freshmen in a college is called the Fourth; the graduating members, corresponding to the seniors, form the First class. Each class is divided into a convenient number of sections, according to the ascertained order of their merit, the divisions being distinct for different subjects of study.

The military character of the corps is that of an infantry battalion of four companies. A commissioned officer of the army, styled "Commandant of Cadets," assisted by four Lieutenants, is charged with the internal police and discipline of the corps. Each company has its complement of officers permanently appointed from the Cadets themselves. These appointments are conferred by the Superintendent upon those who have been most active and soldierlike in the performance of their duties, and most exemplary in their deportment, but without reference to merit in studies. The Captains and Lieutenants are usually selected from the First, the Sergeants from the Second, and the Corporals from the Third class. The Fourth, and those of the other classes who have not received appointments, constitute the rank and file. Strict military etiquette is observed towards these officers by the other Cadets on duty, and they exercise an important influence in the discipline of the school.

Upon all occasions, when the corps, or a portion of it, is under arms, the officers perform the usual military services. The Captains and Lieutenants serve their *tours* of guard according to the Army Regulations. The officer of the day has the particular supervision and command of the guard, is present at parades and roll-calls for military purposes during his *tour*, and takes the names of absentees, and is responsible for public property deposited in the guard-room. Each company and its quarters are under the instruction of an Assistant Instructor of Tactics, being divided into subdivisions intrusted to the immediate care of a Cadet officer, who is at all times responsible for the preservation of good order. Each room is in charge of one of its inmates, styled the "*orderly*," who is answerable to the superintendent of his subdivision. For the purposes of meals, the battalion is arranged into squads corresponding to the number of tables. The "*squad marcher*" is generally a Cadet officer, who acts as carver, and is charged with the preservation of order at his particular table. The highest Cadet Captain, assisted by one or more subordinates, is superintendent of the mess hall. He conducts the battalion to and from meals, preserves order in the hall, and enforces observance of the mess regulations.

Upon the faithfulness of these officers much of the discipline depends, and the degree of faithfulness is proportioned

to the military spirit of the corps. Their duties are strictly defined ; and undue exercise of authority, or a captious, domineering manner, is restrained by what may be termed the public opinion of the corps. But in so large a body of young men, there will always be some who cannot appreciate the necessity of observing minute regulations, and others who continually violate them from carelessness or design. The Cadet officers are, therefore, necessarily brought at times into collision with their companions, and compelled by occasional violations of prescribed rules, or accidental departures from established etiquette, to neglect their duty, or to report a friend or a messmate.

These effects of the system have induced some to think that one Cadet should not be required to inform against another. The Board of Visitors, whose report at the June examination of the last year will be found amongst the documents placed at the head of this article, in reference to this subject use the following language.

“ The duty of supervising and reporting upon the conduct of equals and associates is at once difficult and invidious ; and were it possible to hope that youthful virtue would not sometimes yield to the pressing temptations which must beset it, there might still be reason to doubt, whether the most exact and rigorous fulfilment of such a duty can be favorable to the character, either of him who reports, or of those who are reported.”

That some plausible objections may be urged against the system is not denied. The experience of more than thirty years, however, has proved it, on the whole, to be highly advantageous. The organization of the corps as a battalion could not otherwise be maintained, nor could the students acquire a practical knowledge of discipline ; by which is understood method and order in performing whatever is required of a soldier. The system also offers great inducements to correct deportment, and raises to a high standard the military spirit of the corps. The Cadet officers never act as spies. Treacherous information would be despised, and no instances of it have ever occurred. When not on duty, there is no distinction between the officers and the other Cadets ; at other times, the distinction is well understood and properly maintained.

The studies pursued at the Academy are, for the most

part, scientific. General literature, the languages, except French, *belles lettres*, and the classics form no part of the course. Some misapprehension has existed on this subject, and a detailed account may therefore be interesting.

The course may be considered under three heads ; the first relating to military affairs, the second to scientific, and the third to miscellaneous subjects. The first division comprehends infantry tactics and military police, artillery tactics, the theory and practice of gunnery, pyrotechny, including the actual manufacture of all the different fireworks and combustible materials used in war, fencing, and horsemanship. The second division comprehends mathematics, including algebra, geometry, trigonometry, mensuration, descriptive geometry and the applications of it, analytical geometry, and the differential and integral calculus. It also embraces chemistry, mineralogy and geology, natural and experimental philosophy, including statics, dynamics, hydrostatics, hydrodynamics, the phenomena of magnetism, electro-magnetism, and light, with the construction and use of the instruments necessary to illustrate their principles, and a very minute course of astronomy. Engineering and the science of war are taught, comprehending such a course of civil engineering as to form an admirable basis for the education of a professional man in constructing common roads, railroads, canals, bridges, and harbours. Permanent and field fortification, the composition and organization of armies, castrametation, and the principles of strategy, are also thoroughly taught. The third division includes instruction in the French language, drawing, English grammar, rhetoric, logic, geography, modern and ancient history, moral philosophy, and political science.

This extensive course is well learned by every graduate. The time allotted for study and recitation is never more than ten, nor less than nine, hours every day from September to June. Some individuals, wishing by any sacrifice to meet the demands of the institution, have devoted to study a much longer time, encroaching even upon the period assigned for sleep. This severe application occasionally injures the health ; but methodical habits, temperate living, and regular exercise generally remedy the evil.

The method of instruction adopted at the Academy is peculiar and well calculated to make the students familiar

with the whole course. In those subjects relating to military affairs, the instruction is almost entirely practical. Immediately after the annual June examination, the Cadets go into camp, where they remain until the 28th of August. The camp is a school of practice, there being no recitations during its continuance, except upon a few military subjects by the first class. From the 15th of March to the 1st of November of every year, there is one drill, and during the time of encampment there are several drills, every day. Recitations in tactics are confined to the first class, but the continual performance of manœuvres renders each Cadet so well acquainted with them, that long before he graduates he is competent to instruct a battalion, and could as easily forget his alphabet, at any period of his life, as the evolutions and words of command of infantry tactics.

The Academic year is divided into two terms, the first extending from September to January, the second from January to June. During these two periods, the Cadets study the subjects named under the second and third heads. In mathematics, philosophy, and engineering, the instruction is proportioned to the capacity of the students in the different sections, the more profound and difficult investigations being reserved for the higher sections. Each department has its chief, who is charged with the general direction of the class in that department. Every instructor keeps a daily memorandum of the progress of his pupils and of their relative merit. At the end of the week, he makes a report to the head of his department, who returns it, with that of the section under his immediate care, to the Superintendent. From the weekly class-reports a consolidated report of progress during the month is made up and forwarded to the Inspector, who transmits an abstract of it to the parent or guardian of each Cadet. The weekly reports show the character of every recitation during the week. Each Cadet is required to give such explanations at the black-board as to satisfy the instructor that the lesson is understood, as well as committed to memory. A number indicating the merit of the recitation is affixed to the pupil's name according to a designated scale. The sum of his marks determines his comparative and absolute standing for the week. Should he fall below the required standard, he is transferred to a lower section; and should he rise

above it, he is promoted to a higher one ; but no transfers are made from class to class, except in regular progression, or by turning those who appear deficient into the class below. At the end of each term, there is an examination, at which the attainments of every Cadet undergo an elaborate, searching, and severe investigation. From his appearance upon these occasions, connected with the recorded results of his daily recitations, his relative merit is determined in the different branches of the course.

At the first January examination after the new Cadets enter, their probation terminates. Those who pass it satisfactorily receive their warrants. Those who have failed to make due proficiency, or whose general conduct is unsatisfactory, are recommended for discharge. If a Cadet fail to pass a good examination in June, he is "found deficient" and not permitted to proceed with his class. If his deficiency be attributable to incapacity or inattention, he is discharged ; otherwise, he is allowed to make a second attempt in the class which overtakes him. A second failure insures his discharge. At this examination, the names of the Cadets are arranged in the order of "aggregate merit," as determined for each from his merit in the various subjects of study. This roll is published, and the names of the first five of each class are reported to the Department of War for insertion in the Army Register, with a statement of the studies in which they excel. At the end of the course, the graduating class receive diplomas signed by the Academic Board. Their names are presented to the Secretary of War, with recommendations for commissions in the army. In reference to their promotion, the class is divided into three sections. Those in the first, only, are deemed competent to perform the duties of military engineers, and are recommended for any corps they may select. Those in the second division may select any corps, except that of the military engineers ; and those in the third, are confined to the infantry and dragoons. The relative rank of the graduates corresponds with their standing on the merit roll. Should there be no vacancy in the corps selected, they are attached to it with brevets of second lieutenants.

To the method of instruction, uniting the schemes of the school and of the university, the success of the Academy is chiefly owing. It is the great fault of most colleges, that the

students individually receive but slight attention. Explanations directed to produce a perfect comprehension of the lesson, and adapted to the capacity of each individual, are seldom, if ever, bestowed. Difficult parts of a course are often slighted, and such a superficial knowledge acquired of the subjects, as to render a diploma no certain criterion of knowledge. At West Point, the reputation of each instructor depends upon the success of his section. Each pupil undergoes a daily examination, and does not go through a merely formal recitation. Great pains are bestowed to make him understand, as well as recollect, what he studies. Every Cadet who passes from one class to another has sufficiently proved that he is acquainted with the course. A diploma from the Military Academy affords conclusive evidence, that the owner of it, when he graduated, had a thorough knowledge of every thing taught in the institution.

During term time, only about two hours a day, with Saturday afternoon, are allowed for recreation. In camp, nearly all the time not occupied with military duties is thus employed. The class about commencing their third year are allowed furloughs from the end of the examination to the last of August, if their demerit for the preceding year does not exceed 150. The hotel, which is freely visited on obtaining leave, affords the principal source of amusement. Fifteen years since, West Point having no public house was a place of comparatively little resort, and the corps resided there in almost total seclusion. The hotel has produced a great and beneficial change upon the character of the Cadets, by affording them the advantage of cultivated and refined female society. This intercourse relieves the monotony of military duty, and has changed the summer from a period of wearisome idleness to one of rational amusement. It has improved the manners, enlarged the ideas, and elevated the *morale* of the students very perceptibly to those whose experience, twenty years since, enables them to judge of the effects of the opposite system, which then prevailed. Recreation, however, is never suffered to interfere with the punctilious performance of duties. A young lady is not unfrequently surprised to see her partner abruptly quit her side, and hasten, at the beat of drum, to answer to his name at the roll-call.

Discipline is maintained by a system of punishments, not

severe, but rigidly enforced. They consist of privation of recreation, extra *tours* of guard, reprimands, arrests, or confinement to room or tent, which are inflicted by the Superintendent or with his approbation; confinement in the light or dark prison, inflicted by the sentence of a garrison court-martial; and dismissal, with the privilege of resigning, or public dismissal, by sentence of a general court-martial. Besides the less severe punishments, every offence brings with it consequences, which, like the pangs of remorse, are felt by the offender through his future life, — its effects upon his final standing in his class. This subject has been entirely misunderstood, and justice to the Academy requires that it should be minutely explained.

Every offence against standing regulations, occasional orders, or what may be called the military common law, such as violations of etiquette or unsoldierly behaviour, is reported to the Commandant. If the offender cannot satisfactorily excuse himself, the report is registered against him. Offences are divided into seven classes, each one comprehending those of equal magnitude and represented by a number. In the first year, *ten* stands for the highest and *one* for the lowest degree of “criminality.” For each succeeding year, the rate is increased by adding one-sixth for the second, one-third for the third, and one-half for the fourth year. The total demerit is indicated by “the sum of the products of the number of offences of each class, by the number which expresses the criminality of one offence of that class.” If this sum is more than 200, the offender is deficient in conduct and is recommended for discharge. At the June examination, the demerit of each graduate, during his whole Academic term, connected with his merit in the different subjects of study, is considered in determining his standing. Thorough knowledge of the course, alone, does not secure to a Cadet the highest rank in his class. His general behaviour sensibly affects his final success. He is urged by its great and permanent influence to render, during his Academic career, that conscientious and scrupulous obedience which is the basis of a military character.

The conduct roll has been appealed to by the enemies of the Academy, as proving the conduct of the corps to be very bad. A little reflection will show that the accusation is entirely unjust. The offences registered on this roll im-

ply no moral delinquency. Carelessness and inattention, which elsewhere are considered as unimportant, are faults in the Military Academy. Literal, implicit, unhesitating obedience is inculcated as the first obligation of a soldier, and such strict regard is required to every demand of discipline, that, if it were exacted in a college, it would raise a rebellion. The Cadet who appears in slovenly costume on military duty commits a breach of military propriety. Habitual negligence in small matters of a similar nature, indicated by a demerit of 200, shows him to be unfit for a service which requires attention to the *minutiæ* of discipline, and freedom from the disgrace of immorality. Yet his conduct might exhibit no serious fault, and might be consistent with the highest moral qualities. The conduct roll is the index principally of small offences. It shows not "criminality," which is far too strong a term, but delinquency. It registers not *mala in se*, but *mala prohibita*. The young man whose conduct is of the worst description is generally free from those vices which characterize some institutions. He is punished for faults unnoticed in a college, but properly censurable in a military school. The report of an offence is thus, in itself, a serious punishment, which no other penalty inflicted on the offender is allowed to mitigate. He always undergoes a double, and sometimes a treble penalty for one transgression. Of this system the board observe :

"A benignant influence would be applied to the minds of these young men, if they could be made to feel, when they have once offended, that contrition and amendment will secure oblivion for the past, and that their ultimate standing, when they leave the Academy and enter on life, will not be fatally or very injuriously affected by the delinquencies of their earlier and more inexperienced years." "It is believed, that a system of moral and even military training will prove salutary and powerful, in proportion as the more generous sentiments of our nature are enlisted in its support, and the animating influence of hope and love substituted for the chilling effects of fear."

In this opinion we concur. The system of punishments is altogether too severe. One penalty for a fault is everywhere else considered sufficient. If a specific punishment is inflicted, the offence ought not to affect the future standing of the offender. Only those gross violations of military discipline, which indicate a radical defect in military spirit,

ought to carry with them such lasting consequences. If, however, experience has proved that such a punishment is the most effectual in maintaining subordination, then specific penalties ought never to be inflicted, except in extreme cases, to produce reformation. To sentence a young man to half a dozen extra *tours* of guard in camp, where he is obliged to walk post eight hours out of the twenty-four, once in every five days, in the ordinary performance of his duty, and, after proclaiming his bad conduct first to his parents, and then to the world, to degrade him in his class beside, is pursuing small offences with a degree of severity unheard-of in any other civil or military code.

A general view of the discipline presents many features peculiar to this Academy, arising from its military character. Its severity is apparent from the foregoing account. In whatever situation a Cadet is placed, he is observed by some superior. If he is on military duty, he is watched by military officers, from the colonel to the corporal; if at meals, the supervision extends from the commandant of the mess hall to the carver at the table; if in his room, from the Superintendent to a sentinel, from the officer of the day to the orderly; if at recitation, from the Professor to the section marcher. Under such close inspection, every violation of orders must be known to some one whose duty is to report it. Military department being every where required, it insensibly becomes a fixed habit; and strict attention to regulations is enforced by the certain consequences of detected delinquencies.

The most remarkable effect of the system appears in the natural emulation which it excites. A commission in the Engineers is the greatest reward which the Academy offers, because the duties of this corps are the most scientific, and a member of it is qualified for one of the best professions in the country. The energies of the ablest students, in each class, are therefore exerted to the utmost to secure it. The Engineers consist of only forty-three officers, all but one having graduated at West Point with the first honors. Although the higher officers left the Academy many years since, when the course of instruction was far less extensive, and the standard of merit much lower, than at present, they have established an enviable reputation for theoretical and practical acquirements. The more recent graduates were

commissioned after four years of assiduous and successful application to an extensive course of scientific studies, with a profound knowledge of the subjects taught, and a remarkable aptitude for making further acquisitions under the direction of their distinguished superiors. It seldom happens that more than one out of a class receives a commission in this corps, and the most distinguished student is sometimes endowed with a rare union of intellect and industry, which enables him to place competition at defiance. But, generally, the difference in the capacities of the first five is small, and they strive for superiority with their whole mental and physical power. The desire of standing high upon the published roll is more or less operative upon the rest of the class, according to personal ambition. Those who are lowest strain every nerve to attain the prescribed minimum of merit, that they may not be overtaken by the class below them ; for it is a peculiar feature in the government of the Academy, that no one is allowed to proceed with his class, who has not attained a certain standard of merit. The army requires not only those who are willing, but those who have proved themselves able, to perform its duties. As several are annually dropped from the roll, every Cadet is thus compelled to put forth his whole strength, not merely to save his distance, but to obtain the best standing which his abilities permit ; for he foresees its important influence on his future life. These incentives produce such extreme anxiety, that at the June examination, when the standing for the year is determined, students have been known to faint.

The repeated scrutiny to which each class is subjected secures to the army an annual accession of able men, whose merit has been tested. Every graduate possesses an intimate knowledge of the required studies, and has acquired a habit of application and perseverance highly valuable, whatever may be his future occupations. Severe intellectual labor sometimes depresses the youthful spirit, but permanent injury is never produced. The strength of constitution, the habits of thought, and general character, there acquired, are ample compensation for temporary inconvenience, and place this school much above any other in the country.

Such is the organization of the Military Academy. In the extent of its course of instruction, and the thoroughness

with which it is pursued, it surpasses the English military institutions, and at least equals, if it does not excel, the Polytechnic School at Paris. The slight requisitions for admission, in a country where education is so generally diffused, place it within the reach of the humblest applicant, and form a contrast with the exclusiveness of the French institution, which requires of candidates a large amount of mathematical knowledge.

The objections against the Academy are not formidable, when candidly considered. We shall briefly allude to the most prominent, especially noticing those advanced in New-England. It has been said, that the Military Academy is unnecessary; but a little reflection will show that this assertion is founded in error. The efficiency of an army depends upon the ability of its officers. Mere courage, though patriotism may elevate it to enthusiasm, can seldom, in modern times, win a battle or reduce a fort. War has become a science of much detail, requiring a knowledge of many other sciences, before it can be successfully conducted. Even the small army on the peace establishment of the United States is divided into several corps, each having its own arrangement and charged with its own duties. The single arm of Military Engineering demands an amount of information, which it is the labor of a life to acquire. A knowledge of the French and German languages is required, that the engineer may have ready access to the great repositories of military learning. The large and elaborate drawings of the various works on our seacoast show the necessity of mathematical acquirements. Chemistry, mineralogy, and geology are employed in the selection, preservation, and manufacture of materials; while the science and skill required advantageously to choose the site and determine the form of the structure, the number, power, and position of its arms, are not appreciated by those who perceive in a fortification only a mass of irregular stone-walls, with a multitude of heavy guns frowning from their summits, and a labyrinth of curious arches, which any mason appears competent to construct. To a certain point, military knowledge is the same for all branches of military service; but every department demands, both in peace and war, a kind of learning peculiar to itself. The point of separation is where theory ceases and practice begins. Unless this

country shall become non-combatant in principle, as well as peaceful in policy, and therefore discharge its troops and raze its fortifications, it must always maintain some armed force, so organized, that, on sudden emergencies, it may be quickly and effectively increased. Officers educated for the service, with information and practical skill beyond the power of civilians to attain, must be ready, when circumstances require, to discipline citizens into soldiers, to direct and execute combined operations, and to perform the numberless practical details devolving upon the various corps of a large and active force. Experience has amply demonstrated, that militia cannot be relied upon against a disciplined enemy. The histories of the Revolution and the Late War show, that this force is wasteful and insubordinate in quarters, timorous and uncertain in the field. The volunteer companies in this part of the country are, it is true, for the most part, well armed and drilled. They present, on occasional parades, such a martial appearance, their equipments are so perfect, and their spirit so abundant, that we are apt to imagine that such well-trained corps would be as formidable in war as they are magnificent in peace. The commanders, generally, understand perfectly the school of the soldier, of the company, and even of the battalion ; but their daily habits do not permit them to acquire further knowledge. A company is seldom manœuvred by itself, and even less frequently in connexion with others. Infantry, cavalry, and artillery are never exercised together, nor is the relation of these different arms to each other in the "real business of fighting," practically taught. Acquaintance with evolutions is only a small part of what an officer requires in actual service. The knowledge needed can be obtained only by long study and continued application.

The design of the Military Academy is, to supply the army with men practically and theoretically educated to perform all the duties of its several arms. Such is the sole end of the course of studies. Nothing is taught unconnected with that object. Graduates occasionally become civil engineers, or professors in colleges. Their education qualifies them honorably and usefully to fill such stations ; but these are merely incidental results. The Academy is maintained only to insure the efficiency of the army in the ability of its officers. If it be conceded, that military education is re-

quired for military men,—and so plain a proposition can hardly be denied, — some institution, where such education may be had, is essential to the country, while the possibility of foreign war exists. When private seminaries shall afford the necessary instruction, it will be time to canvass the expediency of destroying the national school.

Other opponents of the Academy, admitting the necessity of such an institution, assert that its original design is wholly perverted, because very few graduates enter the service. The nation, they say, thus gratuitously instructs young men, who return it no equivalent. That many resign their commissions after leaving the Academy is not denied ; but the number of these is somewhat exaggerated. The catalogue, up to July 1st, 1842, registers 1167 graduates, of whom 168 died, and 24 were killed in service ; up to January 1st, 1843, 421 had resigned. Of these, 92 had served from ten to twenty-two years, and 229 from two to nine years, before leaving the army. The Florida war, by ruining their health, forced probably more than one hundred officers to abandon the service. Under all these circumstances, less than one half of the graduates have resigned in the forty years during which the Academy has existed. If this proportion be too large, the fault is chargeable to the President, who accepts or refuses resignations according to his views of the interests of the army. The only fair argument to be drawn from the frequency of resignations is, that the Academy furnishes more graduates than are required, an objection easily obviated, by reducing the number of annual appointments. Fairly considered, this frequency of resignations is no evil, but an important advantage. The country does not lose the money it has expended, nor a return for the education it has bestowed, although every graduate does not retain his commission. The true policy of a nation, which depends for defence on troops whose greatest merit is their patriotism, is to diffuse widely a knowledge of military science. This, to some extent, is done, by annually sending from West Point a large number of young men, well grounded in all the knowledge which an officer requires.

For these reasons, Congress has been repeatedly urged to increase the number of military schools. President Madison, in his annual message to the first session of the four-

teenth Congress, recommended the enlargement of the institution at West Point, and the establishment of others in different sections of the country. At the next session, a bill creating three other schools was introduced and rejected. In 1817, it was proposed to establish one in South Carolina, one at Harper's Ferry, and a third at Newport, Kentucky. In 1820, a motion was made in the House of Representatives, that a National Armory and Military School be established somewhere in the valley of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, and the preamble to the motion assigned as a reason for it, that the North had an Academy where "a proper number of her sons are taught the military art," and that the disbursement of money for similar purposes would benefit the West. Had these attempts succeeded, perhaps the opposition to the Academy, which commenced in the Western and Southern States, would cease to exist. The Western people are not generally enemies of the Academy. Declamatory speeches are occasionally made against it by members of Congress coming from that quarter; but the bitterness manifested by them arises, in many cases, from their jealousy of the North, and, in several instances, can be distinctly traced to personal motives. He would commit a great mistake, who should suppose that these speeches indicated the state of popular opinion in the West.

The opposite objection is not unfrequently urged. It is said, that too many graduates enter the service; that the Academy *monopolizes* the army; that no one can receive a commission unless he has passed through its ordeal. This objection savors somewhat of that advanced by the French Jacobins against the Polytechnic School, — that republican equality was infringed, by appointing to the public service men qualified to perform the duties. But the fact asserted is not true. Should any citizen elsewhere obtain the knowledge required for becoming an officer, no law prevents him from being commissioned. It is true, that most of the officers are graduates; out of 733 on the last Army Register, 554 were Cadets. But the Academy cannot be said to monopolize appointments in the army, until they have been refused to individuals as well qualified as the graduates. Lieutenants are occasionally commissioned, who have had no preliminary military education; a course which the public interest demands should be of infrequent occurrence.

An objection of another character has been repeatedly mentioned. In June, 1842, the legislature of Connecticut passed a resolve, that the Academy was "aristocratic and anti-republican," and ought to be abolished, because "a *very large portion* of the Cadets" "are the sons of wealthy and influential men, who, by the interposition of members of Congress, obtain situations in that institution, to the *almost total exclusion* of poor and less influential men, regardless alike of qualifications and merit." In January last, a convention of militia officers advocated the destruction of the Academy for similar reasons, their hostility being excited, probably, by a comparison of the army with the militia officers. Maine recently followed the lead of Connecticut, and, during the last winter, a memorial against the Academy, founded on the same misapprehension of its character, was presented to the legislature of Massachusetts. These movements, indicating an organized opposition, are in imitation of the example set by Tennessee and Ohio, the former having attacked the Academy, on the same grounds, in 1833, and the latter in 1834.

The charge rests upon the truth of certain alleged facts. If all that is asserted is true, we admit the conclusion. The question is, therefore, entirely one of fact, to be decided by evidence. That every young man, who receives an appointment, receives it by the "interposition of a member of Congress," cannot be denied. Such is the mode of selecting candidates; whether good or bad, it is the law, and can be altered when its operation is shown to be injurious. The last clause of the charge is mere declamation. No "qualifications" are required for admission to West Point, except the mere rudiments of an education. It would be difficult to find in New England a boy sixteen years old, whether the son of a rich or a poor man, who does not possess them. It will not be said, that no young men but those ignorant of these rudiments receive appointments; yet if that be not the case, this part of the charge amounts to nothing; for the only "qualifications or merit," which the appointing power has a right to regard, are those required by law.

The allegations to be proved by the opponents of the Academy are reduced, then, to the following; that the sons of rich and influential men *almost totally exclude* the sons of poor and less influential persons.

We will not stop to ask, whether this accusation is founded on inquiry, or whether it is preferred at random, to excite hostility against the institution in the minds of those who follow their leaders, without troubling themselves to investigate the truth. Nor will we pause to conjecture, whether party fervor may not somewhat have distorted facts, or obscured the judgment, or whether individual disappointment may not lurk at the bottom of these resolutions, and influence be deprecated in one instance, because in another it failed of its object. The Board of Visitors, whose report we have quoted, completely refute this stale charge, by publishing the facts as ascertained by them after official investigation. They observe,

“That apprehensions have been entertained, that the Academy is open rather to the sons of the wealthy and powerful, than to those of all classes of our citizens. Their personal observations, however, and the inquiries they have made as a Board, satisfy them that this impression is without foundation. They have met more than one hundred young men from all parts of the country, who have received appointments within the last year, and who are now awaiting their examination. No person can see them without feeling that they are the sons, in most cases, of the farmers and working men of the country; and several of them are known to the visitors as orphans without property, or as members of families in the humblest circumstances. In order, however, to possess themselves more of the facts which pertain to this question, the board requested detailed information from the Superintendent, in regard to the parentage and pecuniary condition of the present members of the Academy.”

Of the whole number of Cadets, it was ascertained, that 56 were the sons of farmers, 3 of planters, 14 of mechanics, 5 of boarding-house or inn keepers, 12 of physicians, 27 of lawyers or judges, 19 of officers in the army, navy, or other public employments, 4 of clergymen, and 18 of merchants; 20 had no parents living, and 22 were fatherless. Of these, 182 “are represented as being in indigent, reduced, or moderate circumstances”; and “the families of 144 reside in the country.”

Many plans have been suggested to remedy admitted evils in the mode of selection, but none are satisfactory. It may sometimes happen, that young men receive warrants by the

influence of political management. Were this universally the case, we perceive in it no just reason for destroying the Academy. The vast patronage of government in all its departments is more or less devoted to political purposes. This great evil, debasing individual morality, and destroying the national character, demands immediate correction ; but it affords no argument against the custom-house, the post-office, or the navy, nor against the existence of a national school. If officers were commissioned from the ordinary walks of life, instead of coming from the Academy, the same corrupt influences might control the appointments. The mode of selection has its benefits as well as its evils. Members of Congress can select candidates with more regard to circumstances, than if the choice were vested, as formerly, in a central power removed from immediate connexion with the people. The facts given above show that this is a practical advantage.

It is said by many, who think a Military Academy useful and even necessary, that the institution at West Point is a mere engine of political influence. They affirm, that many more appointments are annually conferred than the service requires ; and therefore each class must be reduced during its Academic term, to prevent an undue number from graduating. To effect the reduction, the discipline is made inordinately severe, and the standard of excellence placed at a point unattainable, except by extraordinary talents. It is more than intimated, that this standard varies for different classes, according to their size. Many young men, it is said, are thus sacrificed for political causes. They receive appointments under the delusive hope, that industry and attention will enable them to graduate ; when it is well known, that one half must be turned away under any circumstances, and thus disgraced for no fault but that of failing to reach a fanciful perfection. This charge is supposed to derive support from the fact, that less than one half of those who are appointed Cadets receive commissions as lieutenants. The class which entered in 1837 numbered 82 on its first roll in 1838, of whom 52 graduated. Six of these were turned back from the preceding class, and thus only 46 of the original class were commissioned. That which entered in 1838 numbered 85 on its first roll in 1839, of whom 56 graduated ; two entered in 1837, leaving

54 of the original class. These reductions are alleged to be the predetermined effects of appointing many more than necessity requires.

We have never seen this charge supported by evidence, and can answer it only by a direct denial. The standard which every Cadet is required to attain, although high, is fixed. It is not arbitrarily altered to reduce a graduating class to the usual average. During the six years ending in June, 1842, the proportion discharged varied from 21 to 45 per cent. The class of 1841 furnished twenty-six, and that of 1842 thirty-nine, supernumerary lieutenants, or that number more than the service required when they graduated. These facts, with the uniformity of the average of discharges, remarkable when the character of the entering members is considered, tend strongly to prove, that the standard of merit is kept as near the same mark, for each year, as can reasonably be expected.

We cannot admit, that the standard is unreasonably high. Every Cadet knows, when he enters, that he has before him a task of no small magnitude, in order to meet the requisitions of the Academy. If his friends have overrated his abilities, they can only blame themselves. All that he has a right to demand is, that he shall be impartially judged. The history of the institution, the experience of every one connected with it, and many interesting facts which we must omit from want of space, prove conclusively, that neither political nor personal influence, neither station, birth, nor wealth, has any power to elevate or degrade him ; but that capacity and good conduct are the only requisites for success, and are sure to obtain it. All public education, as a measure of policy, has in view the public, and not individual, advantage for its first object ; and the Military Academy is specially intended to raise the character and maintain the efficiency of an essential branch of the national service. The institution is supported entirely at the public expense. No young man is asked to receive a warrant ; on the contrary, the applications for appointments, each year, are many more than can be granted. The Government offers to every graduate a provision for life in an honorable profession, and is therefore fully justified in exacting remarkable ability and attainments ; for, the greater the reward, the greater should be the price paid for it. The greatest ability which the

country can produce is reasonably to be expected from each graduating class ; and we should rather increase than diminish the appointments, preserving the same average number of graduates, so that, by offering a wider field of choice, the qualifications of those who are annually commissioned in the army may be rendered greater than they now are.

Whether the advantages of the Academy, as some suppose, are purchased at too high a cost, depends upon the value attached to military education. The appropriation for 1842 was \$ 133,641. From this amount, \$ 26,382 must be deducted, being the sum paid to officers on duty at West Point, to which they are entitled, independently of the School. If the whole appropriation was used, the expense for 1842 was \$ 107,259, or about \$ 427 for each Cadet. Of this sum, \$ 338 are for his pay and subsistence, \$ 12 for his proportion of incidental charges, and \$ 77 for his instruction. Considering the extent of the course, the thoroughness with which it is learned, and the object of the Academy, the cost is insignificant.

In a fit of economy, the last Congress withheld the customary appropriation of \$ 2,000 for the Board of Visitors, which is hereafter to be discontinued, unless specially ordered. This Board has had, for more than twenty years, the character of a popular committee. It has consisted of gentlemen of all occupations and professions, from every part of the country, annually invited by the Secretary of War to make "a full and free investigation of the military and scientific instruction of the Cadets, and of the internal police, discipline, and fiscal concerns of the institution ;" for which purpose every facility is afforded by the superintendent. They are requested to "communicate the result of their observations, with any suggestions for the improvement of the Academy," to the Department of War. Their annual reports have been very useful, in furnishing the only authentic and official account of the institution ever published, and in thus diffusing accurate, and sometimes detailed, information respecting its affairs. It is true, that the "suggestions for *improvement*" have been very various, and often whimsical ; but generally the recommendations were valuable, and received attention. The greatest benefit resulting from this annual committee is the individual in-

fluence of its members in dispelling much unfounded prejudice. They were usually men of ability and consideration, and they acquired, in the course of their investigations, a minute acquaintance with the details of the school. The information thus gained was widely disseminated, and did much to "disarm the assaults of the ignorant." We regret the discontinuance of the Board, and concur with that last appointed, in believing, that nothing "can be a more effectual means of guarding the institution from abuse, and retaining public support, than the method now pursued of throwing it open annually to the most rigid inspection, and of inviting suggestions in regard to its welfare and improvement." *

We intended to say a few words upon the constitutional objections to the Academy, which, although generally abandoned, are sometimes zealously urged. The account of the institution which we have given shows, we think, that such objections have no solid basis. Any one, desirous of learning what they are, will find them mentioned, and completely refuted, in an able article on the Military Academy, published in the *American Quarterly Review*, for September, 1837. We will only observe, in conclusion, that if the people of the United States desire for their army educated officers ; if they would not again, as in the war of the Revolution, depend upon foreign assistance, or, as in the Last War, rush into conflict without preparation ; if they would employ their countrymen, instead of foreigners, to plan and construct their forts ; if they have pride in the scientific as well as the literary reputation of the country, they will cherish with affectionate regard the only scientific institution the country affords, — an institution which Washington repeatedly recommended, which Adams founded, which was encouraged by Jefferson, enlarged by Madison, improved by Monroe, and which Jackson once saved from destruction ; which has demonstrated its value by its practical results, and which derives such support from authority, character, and experience, as should commend it to the cordial regard of every patriotic American.

* At the last session of Congress, \$ 40,000 were appropriated for the purpose of erecting new barracks ; those formerly in use having become more uncomfortable than the cells of most State prisons.